

the server computer being programmed to process the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes, and, based on the processing of the order acceptance request, to transmit to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements;

wherein the client computer is programmed to receive the digital coupon, protected by a cryptographic security code, from another computer.

13. (Amended) An electronic commerce system comprising:

a client computer; and

a server computer;

the client computer and the server computer being interconnected by a public packet switched communications network;

the client computer being programmed to transmit to the server computer an order acceptance request comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

the server computer being programmed to process the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes, and, based on the processing of the order acceptance request, to transmit to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of

modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements;

wherein the digital coupon is configured to be used by any coupon holder that possesses the digital coupon, and wherein the server computer is programmed to accept the digital coupon without regard to the identity of the coupon holder.

14. (Amended) An electronic commerce system comprising:

a client computer; and

a server computer;

the client computer and the server computer being interconnected by a public packet switched communications network;

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the client computer being programmed to transmit to the server computer an order acceptance request comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

the server computer being programmed to process the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes, and, based on the processing of the order acceptance request, to transmit to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements;

wherein the server computer is programmed to determine whether a coupon holder is authorized to use the digital coupon and to accept the digital coupon only if the coupon holder is authorized to use the digital coupon.

34. (Amended) An electronic commerce system comprising:

a client computer; and

a server computer;

the client computer and the server computer being interconnected by a public packet switched communications network;

the client computer being programmed to transmit to the server computer an order acceptance request comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

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the server computer being programmed to process the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes, and, based on the processing of the order acceptance request, to transmit to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements;

wherein the cryptographic security codes are embedded within respective ones of the plurality of modular elements.

35. (Amended) An electronic commerce system comprising:

a client computer; and

a server computer;

the client computer and the server computer being interconnected by a public packet switched communications network;

the client computer being programmed to transmit to the server computer an order acceptance request comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of

modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

the server computer being programmed to process the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes, and, based on the processing of the order acceptance request, to transmit to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements;

wherein the cryptographic security codes are digital signatures.

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36. (Amended) An electronic commerce system comprising:

a client computer; and  
a server computer;

the client computer and the server computer being interconnected by a public packet switched communications network;

the client computer being programmed to transmit to the server computer an order acceptance request comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

the server computer being programmed to process the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes, and, based on the processing of the order acceptance request, to transmit to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete

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message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by embedding cryptographic security codes within each of the modular elements;

wherein the cryptographic security codes are message authentication codes.

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39. (Amended) A method of processing order acceptance requests in an electronic commerce system, comprising a client computer and a server computer interconnected by a public packet switched communications network, the method comprising:

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receiving at the server computer an order acceptance request transmitted by the client computer comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

processing the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes; and

based on the processing of the order acceptance request, transmitting to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements;

wherein the client computer receives the digital coupon, protected by a cryptographic security code, from another computer.

40. (Amended) A method of processing order acceptance requests in an electronic commerce system, comprising a client computer and a server computer interconnected by a public packet switched communications network, the method comprising:

receiving at the server computer an order acceptance request transmitted by the client computer comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular

elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

processing the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes; and

based on the processing of the order acceptance request, transmitting to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements;

wherein the digital coupon is configured to be used by any coupon holder that possesses the digital coupon, the method further comprising accepting the digital coupon at the server computer is programmed without regard to identity to the coupon holder.

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41. (Amended) A method of processing order acceptance requests in an electronic commerce system, comprising a client computer and a server computer interconnected by a public packet switched communications network, the method comprising:

receiving at the server computer an order acceptance request transmitted by the client computer comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

processing the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes; and

based on the processing of the order acceptance request, transmitting to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a

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transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements; AND  
further comprising the steps of determining whether a coupon holder is authorized to use the digital coupon and accepting the digital coupon at the server computer only if the coupon holder is authorized to use the digital coupon.

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61. (Amended) A method of processing order acceptance requests in an electronic commerce system, comprising a client computer and a server computer interconnected by a public packet switched communications network, the method comprising:

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receiving at the server computer an order acceptance request transmitted by the client computer comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

processing the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes; and

based on the processing of the order acceptance request, transmitting to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements;

wherein the cryptographic security codes are embedded within respective ones of the plurality of modular elements.

62. (Amended) A method of processing order acceptance requests in an electronic commerce system, comprising a client computer and a server computer interconnected by a public packet switched communications network, the method comprising:

receiving at the server computer an order acceptance request transmitted by the client computer comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the

order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

processing the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes; and

based on the processing of the order acceptance request, transmitting to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements;

wherein the cryptographic security codes are digital signatures.

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63. (Amended) A method of processing order acceptance requests in an electronic commerce system, comprising a client computer and a server computer interconnected by a public packet switched communications network, the method comprising:

receiving at the server computer an order acceptance request transmitted by the client computer comprising a plurality of terms or conditions of a proposed offer for a purchase, the order acceptance request comprising a discrete message that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements, at least one of the modular elements individually protected by a cryptographic security code being a digital coupon;

processing the order acceptance request based on pre-programmed criteria, including authentication of the cryptographic security codes and examination of the modular elements of the discrete message individually protected by the cryptographic security codes; and

based on the processing of the order acceptance request, transmitting to the client computer an order acceptance response based on the pre-programmed criteria, the order acceptance response comprising a discrete message transmitted during a negotiation phase of a transaction that includes a plurality of modular elements whose individual integrity is protected by cryptographic security codes embedded within each of the modular elements;

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wherein the cryptographic security codes are message authentication codes.